# Some Hints ſubmitted to the Conſideration of the Owners and Occupiers of Lands in the County of Devon, upon the Steps moſt proper to be taken in order to obtain a Repeal of the Tax upon Cyder.

By a Freeholder of that County.

IT is unneceſſary at this Time of Day to expatiate on that melancholy Train of Evils which muſt unavoidably follow from the Eſtabliſhment of this Tax, or to enter into a particular Enumeration of its fatal and deſtructive Conſequences to the Proſperity and Welfare of thoſe Parts of the Kingdom which are unhappily ſubjected to it. Theſe are Matters ſo fully underſtood, and ſo univerſally acknowledged, wherever its Influence extends, and the Alarm they have given has been ſo ſtrong, and has ſpread ſo wide, that as far as the Unanimous Complaints and loud Outcries of a People, at the Proſpect of the Diſtreſs which threatens to overwhelm them, may be ſuppoſed to carry with them any Weight, or to have any Chance of prevailing, we might not unreaſonably flatter ourſelves with the Hopes of Redreſs. Notwithſtanding all this, however, there is great Reaſon to apprehend, and I have good Authority for ſaying, that all our Repreſentations hitherto have not produced all that Effect which might be wiſhed on the Sentiments and Inclinations of thoſe who are underſtood to have the greateſt Influence on the Publick Deliberations. Nor ought this indeed to occaſion our Wonder. No Adminiſtration will chooſe to part with a Tax of which they are in Poſſeſſion, until they are convinced that their own Intereſts render ſuch a Condeſcenſion prudent at leaſt, if not abſolutely neceſſary. It happens too, unfortunately, that juſt at this Conjuncture the Publick Authority of Government has been deeply wounded by the licentious Outrage of Faction. This has excited a very general Reſentment among People of Underſtanding and Temper; and an Adminiſtration will very naturally fall in with the Turn of the Tide, and think themſelves juſtified in affecting a more than ordinary Degree of Firmneſs, and even of Stiffneſs, upon every propoſed Alteration which has the Appearance of being recommended by Popular Clamour. To give way to it by receding, and treading backwards thoſe meaſures which are already taken, will with great Plauſibility be ſaid to be intrenching upon the Reputation, weakening the Hands, and degrading the Authority of Government; and thus the reſpectful Remonſtrances of a dutiful and loyal People, extorted from them by the near Approach of a Calamity which threatens little leſs than Ruin to their moſt eſſential Intereſts, will eaſily be confounded with the lawleſs Exceſſes of ſeditious Inſolence.

But whether this Reluctance of the People in Power to grant us the Relief we are ſo loudly calling for is to be aſcribed to theſe or any other Cauſes, and whatever the Pretext may be under which it is diſguiſed, the Fact, I apprehend, is pretty certain, That there is no Intention at preſent to repeal the Cyder Tax: at leaſt Prudence requires we ſhould underſtand it thus, that we may be prepared for all Events, and not be lulled by a fatal Security in the Neglect of thoſe Means which are ſtill in our Power to work out our own Redreſs. The utmoſt, I am afraid, that we are encouraged to hope for is, ſome Alteration in the Forms of Collection, whereby the levying it may be rendered leſs impracticable, and perhaps ſome farther Indulgence as to the Time of Payment. But theſe, and every other Relief of this kind that may be offered, are no better than mere Palliatives. They can ſerve no other Purpoſe than that of gilding the nauſeous Pill that is to be crammed down, in order that we may be prevailed upon to ſwallow it with leſs Struggle. That Complication of Miſchiefs which this Tax muſt infallibly bring upon us ſprings up out of its very Nature, is inſeparable from it under every Shape in which it may be modelled, and will yield to no Correctives which can poſſibly be applied to it. Let us therefore not ſuffer the Change to be put upon us by any Artifice of this Kind. Let us lay it down as a Maxim not to be controverted, That if our Inſtances for Redreſs on the very next Opportunity of applying for it are evaded or eluded, under the Pretext of trying further Experiments, theſe Shackles will be for ever irremediably fixed on us and our Poſterity.

Having pointed out the chief Obſtacles which ſtand in the Way of that Repeal we aim at, I am in Courſe led to conſider the Methods by which they may be moſt effectually ſurmounted, and the Steps which it may be moſt expedient for us to take in order to inſure our Succeſs. And in the firſt Place I think we ought moſt carefully to ſeparate our preſent Application from every the leaſt Mixture of Faction and Cabal. Let the Great People above ſquabble among themſelves as they pleaſe for Place, and for Power. Every Thing of this kind ſhould be conſidered by us with the moſt abſolute Indifference. In whatever Hands the Adminiſtration is lodged we ſhall be treated pretty nearly on the ſame Footing. Paſt Experience ought to have convinced us long ago of this Truth; and he muſt be an incorrigible Dupe indeed who has not yet found out, that Popularity is courted from no other Motive than as a Step to Power, or that expects, when this End is once accompliſhed, any better Return for our Confidence than kicking down that Ladder which was the Inſtrument of aſcending to it.

In the next Place we ſhould be extreamly careful to diſcountenance and ſuppreſs every Thing that has the leaſt Tendency towards Tumult and Violence. All Attempts of this Nature are in Reality ſo many additional Difficulties thrown in the Way of that Redreſs we are ſeeking. How reaſonable ſoever our Pretenſions

Pretenſions may be, every Government will, I am ſure every Government for its own Honour and Preſervation ought, to hold ſo much the faſter whatever is attempted to be wreſted out of its Hands by ſuch unjuſtifiable and dangerous Methods; while at the ſame Time it might be diſpoſed to give it up with a better Grace upon our making a proper Uſe of thoſe Reſources with which our Conſtitution abundantly furniſhes us.

But the Grand Point, on which our Succeſs will principally depend, is, The eſtabliſhing a Conſtitutional Union and Concert among all thoſe who are intereſted in the intended Application. In the Condition in which we are at preſent we are a mere Rope of Sand. Single and Unconnected, we are conſequently without Force or Influence. Armed with a Share of Conſtitutional Power ſufficient to command the Attention, and even the Reſpect, of the moſt firmly eſtabliſhed Adminiſtration, we ſhall be found to have ſcarce Weight ſufficient to merit the Regard of one of Yeſterday, ſtill in a State of actual Fluctuation. Separate Anſwers will eaſily evade the preſſing Inſtances of ſeparate Applications; and what cannot in Prudence be denied to the united Remonſtrances of ſo conſiderable a Part of the Kingdom will be without Scruple or Heſitation refuſed to the diſtinct and private Repreſentations of the particular Members. We have before our Eyes the moſt convincing Proof of the wonderful Efficacy of ſuch an Union as is here propoſed in the other Part of theſe united Kingdoms. Every one knows, that, wherever the Intereſts of Scotland are in queſtion, the Scotch Members are to be depended upon to a Man; and thoſe Intereſts have in Conſequence been reſpected by every Adminiſtration. However complaiſant they may have found them on every other Occaſion, yet it has always been with the Exception -------- *uſque ad Aras*. Nor would a Member, who ſhould have dared to have ſacrificed the National Intereſts in any one Inſtance, ever have ventured to ſhew his Face in Scotland afterwards, much leſs would he have the Aſſurance to pretend to any future Confidence. Let us therefore learn Wiſdom from a Nation which in their own Concerns has never been ſuſpected of being deficient in it, and, having ſo much a larger Share in the Legiſlature (I ſpeak of all that Part of the Kingdom which is intereſted in the preſent Queſtion) let us not fall a Sacrifice to our Want of Publick Spirit and Unanimity.

May I be allowed to mention without Offence the Reſult of the late General Meeting of the Gentlemen of this County as a recent and pregnant Proof how little Fruit is to be expected from any Meaſures taken without previous Concert? The End and Object of this Meeting was to deliberate on the Steps moſt proper and available to be taken in order to procure the Repeal of the Cyder Tax; an End the moſt intereſting to this County that has perhaps ever been offered to our Conſideration. To what a Heighth was the General Expectation raiſed from ſo numerous an Appearance of Gentlemen the moſt diſtinguiſhed by their Rank, Fortune, and Character? And what has it at laſt terminated in? In an Addreſs of Thanks to our Repreſentatives, which was without Doubt extremely proper, and what Gratitude for their eminent and ſignal Services juſtly demanded of us; In a Requeſt to them, that they would at the enſuing Seſſion exert their utmoſt Endeavours to procure this Repeal; and in a Petition to the Houſe of Commons, in order to bring it under a Conſtitutional Deliberation. But how little are we advanced by all this towards Obtaining the Repeal itſelf? We might equally have depended on the Zeal and Activity of our Repreſentatives, whether we had requeſted the Continuance of it, or not: And the Petition, being confined to a few General Reflections, can ſcarce produce any very conſiderable Effect, or make any other Impreſſion to our Advantage, where it is aimed, than as far as it is a Teſtimony of the General Senſe of the County; and yet we have had the Misfortune to experience, that, though this Senſe was as well known and underſtood at the Time the Tax was firſt propoſed, as it will, or can be, by this Expreſſion of it, it was not then thought worthy the Attention of thoſe who hurried on the Determination with ſuch uncommon Rapidity. No Detail in the Petition or at leaſt a very imperfect one only of thoſe particular Circumſtances inſeparable from this Tax, which render it the moſt unequal, the moſt burthenſome, the moſt grievous, and the moſt oppreſſive, that could have entered into the Imagination of a Projector, and which make it impracticable to levy it without ſpreading Ruin and Deſolation through the County. No Allegation of Facts, from which the Truth of theſe Premiſes might be made appear, by the fulleſt, moſt convincing, and undeniable Evidence. Nor would I be underſtood by this Repreſentation to throw any Blame on the Gentlemen concerned in drawing it up. In their Situation it was perhaps impoſſible to do better. As there had been no previous Concert, no Perſon came prepared; and the Shortneſs of the Time allotted for the Performance of their Taſk did not permit them to enter into ſo minute and exact an Examination of thoſe Facts and Circumſtances, as would have been neceſſary to the ſtating them with that Accuracy, which is juſtly required in whatever is ſubmitted to a Publick Enquiry. No Meaſures were taken, nor, as far as I have heard, even ſuggeſted, to procure a Concurrence of Petitions to the Legiſlature, and of Inſtructions to their ſeveral Repreſentatives, from the ſeveral Boroughs of this County, much leſs from thoſe of other Counties united by the ſame common Intereſt; though, whatever weight the Sentiments of the County may be ſuppoſed to carry with them, it is certain, that the moſt inconſiderable of thoſe Boroughs has an equal Share with it in the Legiſlature. Nor ought this neither to ſurprize us. Every Gentleman came with the Expectation of hearing ſome Scheme propoſed; No Perſon had prepared one himſelf. Thus the Proverb was literally verified; What is the Buſineſs of every one was conſidered as properly the Buſineſs of no one; And it appeared evident on this Occaſion, as it will on all others under the like Circumſtances, that the proper Province and Talent of large Aſſemblies under no eſtabliſhed Regulation or Order, is not Conſultation, but Deciſion. It was indeed propoſed by a very worthy Gentleman, that we ſhould addreſs the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Common Council of the City of London, with Thanks for the Aſſiſtance they had

had already afforded us, and a Requeſt for the Continuance of it. But this, as I am informed, was oppoſed by a Gentleman of a Profeſſion, which, whatever Advantages it may draw from an habitual Fluency of Haranguing, is perhaps the leſs proper to aſſume that Lead which it affects to take in all Publick Determinations, upon the Account of that ſtrict Attachment to Forms which is of its very Eſſence, and to which it is ever prepared to ſacrifice the Intrinſick Merits of the Thing in Queſtion. The Objection was indeed perfectly in the true Taſte of the Profeſſion. It was ſaid, that Addreſſing the City of London would be erecting them into a Fourth Branch of the Legiſlature. And this Objection, as palpably frivolous as it is, very naturally prevailed, while no One, under the Uncertainty how far he ſhould be ſupported, had the Courage to controvert it. But, change only the Word, Addreſs, for that of Application, and the Objection inſtantly vaniſhes: Since there can be certainly no Impropriety in Thanking any Man or Body of Men for the diſintereſted Support already vouchſafed us, or in intreating the ſame Support for the future, when it is apprehended it may be of Service to us.

It is now Time to quit the unpleaſing Employment of remarking on paſt Omiſſions and Diſappointments; and to turn our Eyes towards the more agreeable Proſpect of the Opportunity offered us of amply ſupplying every Defect. The approaching Meeting of the Gentry of this County at the Summer Aſſizes affords us this Proſpect. A conſiderable Number will be ſummoned upon the Grand Jury from all Parts of it. Many others may not improbably be expected to attend on Special Juries. Cuſtom has taught us to expect many more, from Motives of meer Curioſity, or the Pleaſure of meeting their Acquaintance. And it is to be hoped that a ſtill greater Number, uninfluenced by either of theſe Views, may be prevailed on to attend by the ſtill more laudable one, of promoting the Welfare of their Country on this moſt important of all Occaſions. When the Gentlemen are thus aſſembled it is humbly propoſed,

THAT they ſhould form themſelves into a Meeting under the Preſidency of their High Sheriff.

THAT they ſhould elect out of their Number a Committee of Gentlemen, to conſider of, ſuperintend, and direct, all ſuch Meaſures as ſhall be judged by them moſt expedient and conducive towards procuring the Repeal of the Cyder Bill; and to aſſemble themſelves for this Purpoſe from Time to Time, at ſuch Place, and at ſuch Intervals, as they ſhall think moſt proper; and, in this View, that ſpecial Regard be had to the Vicinity of the Gentlemen who ſhall be nominated, that they may be enabled to meet together with leſs Inconvenience as often as it ſhall be found neceſſary.

THAT this Committee do appoint a Perſon of good Underſtanding, Abilities, and Activity, to be the Agent in this Matter for the County; to conduct the Proſecution of this Repeal, under their Direction, through all the Steps which can be taken in the Country, which may contribute towards its Succeſs; and to report to them, from Time to Time, at their ſeveral Meetings, the Progreſs he ſhall have made therein, and receive their further Directions thereupon.

THAT this Agent be amply ſatisfied for ſuch his Trouble, ſo as to make it well worth his while to undertake it; and, That for defraying this, and all other incidental Expences which may be incurred, and alſo for employing a Sollicitor in Parliament at London, if it ſhould be thought requiſite, when this Matter comes under Conſideration there, a Subſcription be entered into, to be immediately paid down to ſuch Perſon as the Committee ſhall authorize to receive it; who, aſſoon as the Point is one way or other decided, ſhall account for it in one of the Publick Papers of this County, and return to the Subſcribers, in Proportion to their Subſcriptions, whatever Reſidue may be left.

THAT this Agent do apply to every Borough in this County, by Letter, or even Perſonally, if it ſhould be found neceſſary, to remind them ſeverally of preſenting their Petitions to the Honourable the Houſe of Commons in Favour of this Repeal, in which they have all a common Intereſt, and of inſtructing their Repreſentatives to exert their utmoſt Endeavours in Support of ſuch their Application; and That he do aſſiſt them, where it ſhall be deſired, in drawing up ſuch their Petitions and Inſtructions.

THAT he do, in the Name, and under the Direction, of the Committee, apply to the Gentlemen of the neighbouring Counties of Cornwal and Somerſet in order to their eſtabliſhing the like Concert among themſelves reſpectively in a Point in which they are equally intereſted, and to their engaging in it the ſeveral Cities and Boroughs which are ſituated within, or in the Neighbourhood of, thoſe Counties.

THAT he do extend this Concert and Correſpondence even to the more remote Counties of Glouceſter, Hereford, Worceſter, and any others which by a Similitude in their Circumſtances are embarked in the ſame common Cauſe, as far as it ſhall be found practicable.

THAT he do cultivate an Union, as to this Point, with the City of London, which hath already by the late unanimous Reſolution of its Common Council declared itſelf ſo generouſly in our Favour. For a Repeal of ſo much of the late Act as ſubjects the Makers of Cyder and Perry to the Exciſe Laws is in Effect equivalent to a Repeal of the Duty itſelf; ſince to collect an Inland Duty on Liquors under any other Laws or Regulations than thoſe of Exciſe is utterly impracticable; and the Produce of ſuch further Duty on ſuch Cyder as ſhall be ſent by Sea Coaſtways will be found an Object ſo inconſiderable, as to afford no Temptation to a Miniſter to diſoblige a County or two by the invidious Diſtinction of ſubjecting them to a Tax from which the reſt of the Kingdom would be entirely exempt.

THAT at the firſt Meeting of Parliament for the Diſpatch of Buſineſs, the Repreſentatives of the ſeveral Counties, Cities, and Boroughs, intereſted would be pleaſed ſo far to oblige their Conſtituents as to give their earlieſt Attendance in Town, ſo as, if poſſible, to be all there at the Opening of the Seſſion. That they would be pleaſed to aſſemble themſelves together, and go in a Body to the Great Man, whoever he ſhall then happen to be, acquaint him with the Deſires and juſt Expectations of their Conſtituents, requeſt his Concurrence and Aſſiſtance, and at the ſame time give him to underſtand, with Plainneſs and

Firmneſs

Firmneſs, that in Caſe he ſhould make it his Choice rather to oppoſe or elude them, he is to expect no Complaiſance from them any farther than the Indiſpenſable Exigencies of the National Intereſts may require. This Language will be readily underſtood; and ſuch an united Repreſentation cannot fail of having the greateſt Weight wherever it is made, or of contributing in the higheſt Degree, beyond every other Means in our Power, towards working out that Deliverance which we all ſo ardently wiſh for, and with ſo much Impatience expect.

In offering this rough imperfect Sketch to the Conſideration of the County, I am not vain enough to think it doth not ſtand in need of great Correction and Improvement. On the contrary, I propoſe it only in the View of exciting Perſons of greater Abilities and better Judgment to make thoſe Corrections and Improvements, or even to ſubſtitute a better Plan in its Place. But at preſent we are proceeding on no Plan at all; and I am afraid the Succeſs of our Endeavours may be expected to turn out accordingly.

After all, many will be doubtleſs inclined to imagine, that there is no Occaſion for all this Trouble and Preparation; and that the Cyder Tax will be repealed merely in Compliance with the General Cry of the Country. I moſt ſincerely wiſh this Expectation may be confirmed by the Event. But as nothing is certain in Human Affairs, ſuppoſe it ſhould not. What a Poor Conſolation will it be to ſay in our Excuſe, Who would have thought it? When we have exerted our Endeavours, it is then reaſonable to acquieſce in the Determination of Providence; but how ſhall we be able to bear the Reproaches of our own Minds, or to reflect on thoſe which will be made us by our Poſterity, when we ſhall be conſcious of having betrayed ours and their moſt Eſſential Intereſts by our own weak Credulity, and by the moſt ſupine and unaccountable Negligence.

# The Freeholder.

4 AP 65